

# **Navigating the Tenure & Promotion Process:**

## **Advice to Candidates**

### **April 26, 2011**

**Prepared by the University Committee on Tenure & Promotion (UCTP)**

#### **Candidate's Responsibility**

The primary responsibility for preparing the file and making the case for promotion and/or tenure is on you, the candidate.

- You must thoroughly document your activities and accomplishments in the areas of teaching, service, and research/performance. Investing the time and effort to do this well can make the difference between success and failure.
- The candidate's personal statement is an important part of the file and it would be very unwise to omit it, even though it is *optional*. It gives you the opportunity to explain aspects of your record that may be unclear, such as your role in collaborative or co-authored work. It gives you the opportunity to address any aspects of your record that might be perceived as weaknesses by reviewers outside your unit. And, it gives you the opportunity to interpret your record and emphasize how it meets unit criteria. When a question arises in the minds of UCTP members, a primary place to seek the answer is the candidate's personal statement.
- Remember that many people who will read your file, including the majority of the people on UCTP, will have no familiarity with your area of scholarship or the culture of your discipline.

#### **Tenure and Promotion Calendar**

There are two tenure-track start dates per year: January 1 and August 16. Tenure and promotion decisions for candidates hired in August are evaluated in the fall of their penultimate year. Candidates hired in January are evaluated in the spring of their penultimate year, one semester earlier than candidates hired in August. Candidates for promotion to Full Professor are evaluated in spring as well. Please consult the 2011-2012 Tenure and Promotion Calendar on the Provost's website.

#### **Centrality of Unit Criteria**

The applicable unit criteria will be the basis for evaluation of your file by all persons reviewing your record.

- Be sure that the criteria included in the file and used by all persons reviewing your record are the *correct* ones.
  - For tenure, faculty members have the option of using the criteria that were in effect at the time they were hired or the criteria in effect at the time of application for tenure.
  - For promotion beyond the probationary period, the criteria to be used are those in effect at the time promotion is sought.
  - Faculty hired into the tenure track prior to January 1, 1995, may choose to be considered under the pre-1995 criteria under which they were hired.
- Failure to use the correct criteria may lead to remanding of the file back to the unit and possibly the solicitation of new referees' letters. Almost every year, files are sent back because of the use of the wrong criteria.
- Unit criteria only become official when they are approved by UCTP. Your unit may have started a revision process but these criteria do not apply unless they are approved by the UCTP.
- Work closely with your unit T&P Chair to ensure that the correct version of the criteria are used for consideration of your file.

- The information in the file should be aimed at demonstrating that the *applicable* criteria for tenure and/or promotion have been met.

### **Scholarship**

- It is vital that your role in collaborative research and co-authored publications be made clear. Otherwise, this work may be discounted by some reviewers. Letters from your collaborators addressing this issue are helpful. You should describe your contribution in your personal statement and it may also be useful to indicate percentage contribution to co-authored papers in the refereed publications list.
- The way in which paper authorship is organized differs from discipline to discipline. In some cases, authors are simply alphabetical, in others the senior author may be last and it is customary to put a graduate student or post-doc who did the work first. This should be stated in, for example, the personal statement.
- In some fields, single author papers are the norm; in others such as many of the sciences, they are comparatively rare. It would be wise to clarify this in your personal statement.
- It is particularly important that your contribution be documented when you have continued to work with your dissertation chair or others at the institution from which you obtained your degree or at which you were a post-doctoral fellow. The file should demonstrate the originality of your work to the extent possible.
- The letters of external referees are given a great deal of weight in the review process. In some units, some of these referees are, or may be, chosen by the candidate. Persons with close personal or professional ties to the candidate should not be used as referees. Examples include: the candidate's dissertation adviser, co-authors, former professors, classmates, or colleagues with whom the candidate served at other institutions.
- Make sure that publications are accurately represented on the form (e.g., books vs. book chapters, refereed vs. non-refereed, sole authored vs. co-authored). Authors should be listed in the same order that appears in the publication. Inaccuracies give the impression that you felt it necessary to pad your record.

### **Teaching**

- The file must contain a summary of your teaching evaluations. This will be written by a senior member of your unit faculty. This summary should reflect both student and peer evaluations. The teaching evaluations generally play an important role in assessment of your teaching; therefore, you should review the summary and make sure that it presents a clear and accurate portrayal.
- If your evaluation scores are compared with some other group of scores, make sure that any such group is clearly identified – e.g., the unit average, the unit average for undergraduate courses, the unit average for all sections of the same course, etc.
- Supervision of PhD students is another important aspect of teaching. To allow meaningful evaluation of your record in this area, be sure that information is provided about the number of PhDs typically graduated by your unit. If you are an assistant professor and it is not usual for assistant professors to have PhD students in your unit, this should be pointed out.
- In some instances, it may be useful to provide information about the proportion of students who completed the evaluation forms.

### **Service**

This comprises service to your department, to your college, and to the university as a whole (in the form of committees etc.). There may also be reference in the criteria to service to the profession (e.g. participation in your professional society, work on grant study sections, organization of conference sessions etc).

Normally service is emphasized less than teaching and scholarship, especially in tenure and promotion to associate professor decisions.

### **Additional Letters**

Solicitation of letters of support by the candidate is generally not worth the time and effort. However, there are exceptions in letters that address specific issues in the file:

- Your contribution to co-authored publications
- Your contribution to multi-investigator grants and grant applications
- Your contribution to team-taught courses
- Why the evaluation scores do not accurately reflect the quality of your teaching.

Other correspondence that should be included are:

- Memorandum of Understanding if you were hired under a special arrangement (e.g., reduced teaching load, joint appointments)
- Letters of acceptance for journal articles and book contracts

### **Organization and Appearance of the File**

- If you are submitting a paper file, use tabs to identify the material in each section. The tabs should contain words as well as section numbers (the Provost's Office has a model file with such tabs).
- Do not send in a badly organized file
- Run the spell checker! Typographical errors make you look bad and are interpreted by some reviewers as a lack of a professional approach
- Make sure all parts of the file are included
- Make sure they are in the correct order

### **Further information**

Faculty Manual [http://www.sc.edu/policies/facman/Faculty\\_Manual\\_Columbia.pdf](http://www.sc.edu/policies/facman/Faculty_Manual_Columbia.pdf)

USC T&P web site <http://www.sc.edu/tenure/>

UCTP Guide to Criteria and Procedures (Goldenrod Manual)  
<http://www.sc.edu/provost/forms/goldenrod.pdf>

Current criteria: <http://www.sc.edu/tenure/unitcriteria.shtml> (The current criteria may not apply to you)

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